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Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

4815th meeting

Wednesday, 27 August 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Mekdad	(Syrian Arab Republic)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Muñoz
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Germany	Mr. Trautwein
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Mexico	Mr. Pujalte
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in Liberia

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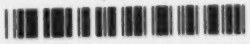

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Liberia

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and with the consent of the Council, I shall take it that the Council agrees to extend invitations to the representatives of Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal to participate in the meeting without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Akufo-Addo (Ghana) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Mamadou Bamba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nigeria.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Adeniji (Nigeria) took a seat at the Council table.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Fall (Senegal) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish to acknowledge the presence of our former colleague from Guinea, who is now the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Guinea, His Excellency Mr. François Fall, at this meeting. On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to him.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

It is so decided.

On behalf of the Council, I extend a warm welcome to the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States, Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and invite him to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

This meeting is indeed an extraordinary one. The presence of five ministers and of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS is in itself an event. It truly represents an exceptional and extraordinary moment in the lives of the people of Liberia, who have suffered for so long and deserve all the due attention of our Council in order to put an end to their distress and to chart the course of their development and progress.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by the current Chairman and Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, respectively. Thereafter, the Security Council will hold a private meeting with the ECOWAS delegation, at which Council members may ask questions.

I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana and current Chairman of ECOWAS, Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo.

Mr. Akufo-Addo (Ghana): Allow me at the outset to express to the United Nations through you, Sir, the deep condolences of our entire delegation over the recent tragic loss which the United Nations suffered in Baghdad. May the souls of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the others rest in perfect peace.

On behalf of the ministerial delegation and the executive secretariat of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I want to express our appreciation for the opportunity given us at such short notice to address this most august of bodies. This, I believe, is another indication of the interest the

Security Council has always shown in ECOWAS and its efforts to promote lasting peace in the West African region.

The delegation I have the honour to lead — which includes a former member of this Council, Mr. François Fall, the Foreign Minister of Guinea; Mr. Mamadou Bamba, the Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire; Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and a well-known figure to members of the Council; and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Ibn Chambas — is here in execution of directives by the authority of the heads of State and Government of ECOWAS that the Security Council should be constantly briefed on activities undertaken by ECOWAS as part of efforts to promote peace. It is a double honour for me, since, as late as 28 April, I was privileged to lead another such delegation to brief the Council on developments in Côte d'Ivoire.

On our part, it was with great pleasure that we played host to the very important mission that the Security Council sent to our region in 2001, which led to the establishment of the United Nations Office for West Africa. Another important Security Council mission visited West Africa as recently as June 2003 to get a first-hand view of events in our troubled region. All these actions convinced us that the West African region continues to be at the centre of the Security Council's preoccupations and ECOWAS is indeed grateful for the initiatives taken by the Council.

We have come here today to brief the Council on the situation in Liberia and, more particularly, on the efforts ECOWAS has made, with the assistance of the African Union and the international community, to ensure that peace returns to that country, which has been so ravaged by war and is facing a disastrous humanitarian situation. ECOWAS is resolutely committed to the search for lasting peace in Liberia with a view to ensuring stability not only in that country, but also in the entire Mano River Union area and the ECOWAS community at large. In this regard, I wish to express our gratitude to the United Nations for the extensive contributions it has made to the peace in Sierra Leone.

As members of the Council will recall, several initiatives have been taken to promote lasting peace in Liberia. These include the meeting organized in Abuja on 15 and 16 March 2002, preparatory to the national reconciliation conference on Liberia; the eighth meeting of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, held in Dakar on 29 March 2002; the summit of ECOWAS heads of State and Government, held in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, on 17 May 2002; the meeting between the Liberian Inter-Religious Council and ECOWAS; the Liberian Leadership Forum, held in Ouagadougou from 8 to 11 July 2002; and the Security Council workshop on the Mano River Union. Following those meetings, a decision was taken to establish an International Contact Group on Liberia to assist ECOWAS and the United Nations in their efforts to restore lasting peace to Liberia and the Mano River Union area through political dialogue.

Following meetings among the Contact Group; the current ECOWAS Chairman, the tenacious President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor; the Taylor Government of Liberia; Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD); the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL); civil society organizations; and various political groups, aimed at ensuring the widest representation possible, the Liberian peace talks finally began at Accra on 4 June 2003. Chaired by General Abdulsalami Abubakar, former head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as ECOWAS-appointed mediator, the peace talks were aimed at obtaining a ceasefire agreement and at bringing the parties involved to sign a comprehensive peace agreement.

On 17 June 2003 — two weeks after the talks had begun — a ceasefire agreement was concluded among the Taylor Government of Liberia, LURD and MODEL, the combatants of the Liberian conflict. Following the signing of the ceasefire agreement, negotiations continued and culminated in the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra — the Accra accord — on 18 August. The process was undoubtedly painstaking and long, having taken more than three months, during which the mediator had to crisscross the region to meet leaders of the rebel movements who were not present at Accra and a number of heads of State in the region whose countries play crucial roles in resolving the crisis.

One factor that contributed significantly to the conclusion of the Accra accord was certainly the departure for Nigeria of Charles Taylor, whose exit had been vociferously sought by a wide spectrum of Liberian opinion and by powerful forces within the global community as a necessary condition for the

restoration of peace in Liberia. His departure took place at a historic ceremony in Monrovia on 11 August 2003, witnessed by leading dignitaries of the continent: Joaquim Chissano, President of Mozambique and current Chairman of the African Union; Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa and immediate past Chairman of the African Union; and John Kufuor, President of Ghana and current Chairman of ECOWAS. That day, Charles Taylor honoured his pledge, turned over power to his Vice-President — now President — Moses Blah, and left the country for voluntary exile in Calabar, in the great Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I should like to take this opportunity to express once again the gratitude of the entire ECOWAS community to Nigeria, and particularly its President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, for his generous act of statesmanship, not only in offering political asylum to President Charles Taylor, but also in deploying a vanguard force of two Nigerian battalions to Liberia to help begin the process of stabilizing that country. The first troops belonging to the interposition force were deployed on 4 August 2003. The force is currently made up of 1,696 men, but its total strength is expected to increase to about 3,500 by 4 September 2003. The interposition force was deployed with the assistance of the United Nations and the United States of America. Peace is gradually returning to Liberia as the guns begin to fall silent.

I should also like to take this opportunity to commend the Secretary-General, my compatriot Kofi Annan, and the President of the United States of America, George Bush, for their personal commitment to the cause of peace in Liberia. It is for that reason that we view with considerable anxiety recent measures by the Government of the United States, including the withdrawal offshore of the Marines in Liberia and yesterday's statement that the United States Government will pull out of direct involvement in the resolution of the Liberian crisis on 1 October, when the United Nations peacekeeping operation is scheduled to begin.

The signing of the Accra Agreement marked a significant step towards peace in Liberia. ECOWAS and its partners on the African continent and in the rest of the international community should, therefore, work together to ensure effective implementation of the Agreement. The Agreement, comprehensive in nature, provided an opportunity to reaffirm a number of principles that are very dear to ECOWAS, the most of significant of which is the determination of the Community to uphold the conduct of legality in the affairs of member States and to avoid — despite any practical accommodations that may be necessary for peace — the conferment of any reward for insurgency. That is why, at the insistence of the ECOWAS Chairman and with the agreement of broad sections of Liberian society, the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman of the Transitional Government, due to take office on 14 October 2003, came from civil society, not from the insurgents.

The Accra Agreement covers the cessation of hostilities; the containment, disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of combatants; security sector reform; restructuring of the security forces; the release of prisoners and abductees; human rights issues; humanitarian issues; post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction; the settlement of disputes; political issues such as, inter alia, the establishment of a governance reform commission, electoral reform, the organization of elections, the interim Government and the establishment of a Transitional Government; and, finally, the conduct of credible elections in Liberia in October 2005.

What are the prospects for successful implementation of the Peace Agreement? Much will depend on the following: the adherence of the combatants to the ceasefire, the commitment of the parties to fulfil their obligations under the Accra accord and the support of the international community. The deployment of the international stabilization force and the return of humanitarian agencies and of displaced persons and refugees — some of which have begun in earnest — will all depend on the success of the ceasefire.

Consequently, every effort should be made to help ECOWAS to maintain the vanguard force in Liberia until the international stabilization force is deployed so as to secure the ceasefire. It is our expectation that the ECOWAS vanguard force will, on 1 October, be blue-hatted as the first elements of the United Nations peacekeeping mission, which will be subsequently strengthened by contributions from other United Nations Member States. We believe that the follow-up Security Council resolution called for by resolution 1497 (2003) of 1 August to give effect to the 1 October deadline for the start-up of the United Nations operation will reflect that expectation. It is vital that the Security Council adhere to that deadline

and ensure that it is met if the momentum for peace in Liberia is to be maintained.

Similarly, the regional, continental and international communities should work in unison to ensure that the various parties fulfil their obligations under the Accra accord. The international community should also give its full support to the Committee responsible for monitoring the Agreement. Assistance from the international community will enable Liberia to implement the disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation programme and the reinstallation, rehabilitation and reintegration programme for the combatants — matters of the greatest moment if durable peace is to be obtained in Liberia and in the region.

In 1997, a golden opportunity to achieve the disarmament of the combatants in Liberia was lost. The cost of that lost opportunity is all too plain to see. We cannot afford a repeat of that tragic error. We must, all together, find the will and the resources to ensure that, this time, the goals of disarmament and reintegration are fully achieved.

To conclude, I wish to reaffirm the determination of ECOWAS to continue to engage in Liberia even after deployment of the stabilization force, through the office of the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary, and continue to contribute troops to the stabilization force.

Permit me once again to express our gratitude to the Security Council and to the Secretary-General for their continued concern and support. I also thank the members of the international community, particularly the United States Government and the European Union, for their pledge to assist ECOWAS.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, current Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States for the heartfelt condolences he extended to the United Nations and to the Security Council on the demise of Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, and members of his staff as a result of the atrocious act of aggression against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of ECOWAS.

Mr. Chambas: It gives me great pleasure to address the Security Council on this special occasion of a briefing on the peace process in Liberia.

Since the visit of a Security Council delegation to West Africa in June 2003, significant progress has been achieved in bringing an end to the civil war in Liberia and establishing the basis for returning that country to lasting peace. Indeed, the Council's visit to our subregion not only gave impetus and structure to our collaboration and continuing dialogue, but more important, served as a catalyst for the Accra peace talks which were then ongoing. The Council delegation's presence in Accra was timely, and strongly underscored the support of the United Nations in particular, and of the international community as a whole, for the initiatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to return Liberia to peace and security. It encouraged the Liberian stakeholders to utilize dialogue and negotiation to settle their differences, rather than violence and war, which have over the years ruined their country. The Council buttressed the position of the African Union and ECOWAS that no group which sought to attain political power by force of arms would obtain the recognition of the international community, least of all, that of the Security Council.

The Council delegation warned that those who would take lightly the lives of others with impunity and disregard for international humanitarian law would not go unpunished. But it also offered the firm support of the Council to the peace process, with assurances that if Liberians would demonstrate a resolve to end the war and agree on a comprehensive accord that would return the country to normalcy, the Council would in turn authorize a peacekeeping operation and would galvanize international humanitarian reconstruction and redevelopment assistance for Liberia.

The excellent working relationship between the Security Council and ECOWAS in the resolution of the Liberian crisis is a shining example of the partnership that should exist between this body and regional organizations in tackling regional issues of peace and security.

There is no gainsaying that we have much to gain from deepening collaboration to better deal with conflicts and political instability in our subregion, through addressing issues such as conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peace-building,

humanitarian concerns, human rights, et cetera. We truly look forward to strengthening the relations that are developing systematically between ECOWAS and the Security Council. In that regard we call for the establishment of a consultative mechanism under which there would be regular meetings between the United Nations and ECOWAS, alternately in New York and in Abuja, to discuss developments in Liberia, structured similarly to what we had in the case of Sierra Leone. We hope that the resolution which we hope the Council will adopt soon to authorize a peacekeeping operation will establish such a mechanism.

The appointment of Mr. Jacques Klein as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Liberia is also very welcome. Mr. Klein was in Accra during the final phase of the peace talks. He had the opportunity to meet most of the key Liberian personalities with whom he will be working to ensure the thorough implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. ECOWAS looks forward very much to a close working relationship with Mr. Klein principally through the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary in Liberia, Mr. Francis Blain.

We also wish to commend the efforts of Mr. Abou Moussa, with whom we have worked very closely over the past year. We hope he will continue to play a useful role in Liberia, given his tremendous experience and knowledge of the political and humanitarian situation in the subregion.

I shall now focus my remarks on three issues that require special attention in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the Liberian parties. First is the issue of armed groups that have moved about freely from one country to the other in the Mano River Union area and also in western Côte d'Ivoire. The armed groups in Liberia have among them several thousand nationals of other West African countries but, especially, significant numbers of Sierra Leoneans. This matter deserves special attention, as these armed elements could pose a threat to the peace that now happily prevails in Sierra Leone. Conscious and deliberate efforts should be directed at their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into the West African community. They should certainly not be allowed to infiltrate back into their various countries, for instance Sierra Leone, with their weapons.

The return of peace to Liberia should help consolidate peace in neighbouring countries, as Liberia should no longer be a source of arms and armed groups fuelling conflicts in the subregion. To ensure this, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Liberian combatants should be an integral part of the peacekeeping operation. The authorized budget of the peacekeeping operation should include the effective disarmament, demobilization and, I emphasize, reintegration of the thousands of youths into Liberia society in constructive and productive employment. These youths should be provided skills and opportunities for employment more worthy than the banditry and killing they have been accustomed to over the past decade or so.

Secondly, now that we seem to be bringing the conflict in Liberia under control we should pay attention to the urgent need to curb the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in West Africa. Nowhere have the damaging consequences of these types of weapons been felt more than in Liberia and the Mano River Union countries, where they have done so much harm to innocent people. ECOWAS would like to cooperate with the international community to identify ways in which we can prevent, combat and eradicate illicit brokering in small arms and weapons. Illicit arms brokering plays a key role in facilitating illegal transfers of arms to groups that are prevented from buying them legally — such as embargoed States and groups, insurgents, organized criminals and terrorists. Arms-producing States should establish a formal register of arms brokers. We see a register as a useful way of keeping arms brokers informed of their responsibilities. Also, the ability to strike people or companies from the register would be a very strong signal to them that, wherever they are operating, Governments are able to effectively monitor and control their activities to ensure that they are in the best interests of Africa's people.

The other issue I wish to call attention to is the need to review the current regime of sanctions against Liberia. The sanctions were imposed on Liberia for its role in support of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and for the failure of the Government of former President Taylor to respect the resolutions of the Council.

Today, the interim Government of President Blah not only denounces any support for rebel groups that might seek to overthrow the Governments of

neighbouring countries but also seeks to build good-neighbourly relations based on friendship and cooperation. Furthermore, on 14 October 2003, a Transitional Government will be inaugurated pursuant to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of Accra. It will be an all-inclusive Government of national unity to lead Liberia through the two-year transition period.

As the Foreign Minister of Ghana has observed, the Transitional Government faces monumental challenges. Keeping the current regime of sanctions in place will doubtless make it impossible for it to function effectively. Therefore, I would strongly entreat the Council to consider lifting all the sanctions currently imposed on Liberia, except the arms embargo, to further signal support for the Liberian peace process.

Finally, I wish to register the deep appreciation of ECOWAS towards the United Nations; towards Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his personal commitment to seeing Liberia climb out of the abyss in which it has found itself for more than a decade; towards the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs for working closely with us and providing invaluable technical and material support; and, of course, once again, towards this crucially important organ of the United Nations, the Security Council, for giving high priority to meeting its responsibility for the maintenance of peace and security in our West African subregion.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): Following consultations among the members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

> "The Security Council welcomes the briefing provided by representatives of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), including Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ghana Nana Akufo-Addo, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire Mamadou Bamba, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Guinea François Fall, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria Oluyemi Adeniji, Permanent Representative of Senegal Ambassador Papa Louis Fall, and Executive Secretary of ECOWAS Ambassador Mohamed Ibn Chambas, on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached in Accra, Ghana, on 18 August 2003.
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> "The Security Council welcomes the Comprehensive Peace Agreement reached by Liberia's Government, rebel groups, political parties and civil society leaders in Accra, Ghana, on 18 August 2003.
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> "The Security Council appreciates the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly organization Chairman and President of Ghana John Kufuor, Executive Secretary Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and mediator General Abdulsalami Abubakar in negotiating this agreement.
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> "The Security Council remains concerned at the situation in Liberia, particularly the continuing dire humanitarian situation of much of the population. It calls on all parties to allow full, secure and unimpeded access for humanitarian agencies and personnel.
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> "The Security Council again stresses the need to create a secure environment that enables respect for human rights, including the well-being and rehabilitation of children especially child combatants, protects the well-being of civilians, and supports the mission of humanitarian workers.
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> "The Security Council pays tribute to the donors that are supporting the deployment of ECOMIL, encourages all Member States to provide financial, logistical and material support to the Member States participating in the ECOWAS-led force, and calls on the donor community to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to those in need in Liberia.
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> "The Security Council urges all parties to respect fully the ceasefire and to implement fully all their commitments under the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in Accra on 18 August, including through full cooperation with the Economic Community of West African States' Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), the United Nations, the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL), the African Union (AU), and the United States to establish a Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC), which is a critical aspect of the Liberian peace process, as required under the Accra Agreement.

"The Security Council reaffirms its readiness as stated in paragraph 2 of its resolution 1497 (2003) of 1 August 2003 to establish a follow-on United Nations stabilization force to support the transitional Government and to assist in the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Liberia."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2003/14.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to a private meeting to continue our discussion of this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.